



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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Approved for Release  
by the Central Intelligence Agency  
Date: 13 NOV 2013

To : The Secretary

From: NEA - Alfred L. Atherton, Jr.  
INR - Harold H. Saunders

Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments  
No. 411, March 24, 1978

Weizman, in a *Maariv* interview published today, called for the establishment of a "peace coalition" government. This interview, which Weizman told our Charge yesterday was given without Begin's knowledge, constitutes a major political challenge to the Prime Minister. Weizman's growing discontent with what he regards as an excessively hard line by Begin and his steadily rising apprehension that the chance for peace with Egypt may be lost because of Begin's rigidity, are coming to a head in the wake of what is widely perceived in Israel as Begin's unsuccessful visit to the US.

Weizman's appeal to the Labor Alignment to join the government seems designed to:

- put pressure on Begin either to modify his adamant stance on settlements and other issues of importance to Israel's image in the US and to the negotiating process or to agree to broaden the coalition as a means of strengthening pragmatic elements within the government; and, at the same time,
- demonstrate Israel's determination to resist external pressure for unacceptable concessions.

Weizman's bold move leaves unanswered the questions of how far the Defense Minister is likely to go if Begin refused to broaden the coalition or adopt a softer negotiating line and whether Weizman has altered his own long-standing opposition to territorial concessions in the West Bank.

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~~TOP SECRET~~

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- 2 -

Weizman is a novice when it comes to political infighting. He was badly mauled when he challenged Begin's authority in the past. Nevertheless, Weizman may have calculated that his own position has been sufficiently strengthened, and Begin's sufficiently weakened, to enable Weizman to bring about policy changes. (His recent success in compelling Begin to halt work on the Rafah settlements may have misled him about the prospects for winning the policy battle while simultaneously avoiding a break with the Prime Minister.)

Begin will regard Weizman's challenge as a public attack on his performance as Prime Minister and will greatly resent an attempt to force his hand in the wake of his US visit. Weizman's quasi-public ultimatum over settlement activity, his warm treatment by Sadat, the perception within Israel that Weizman is the Egyptian-American candidate for Prime Minister, and the *Maariv* interview may combine to lead Begin to move decisively against Weizman. On the other hand, Begin may be held back by the view in Israel that his trip was a failure, Weizman's popularity, and the need to maintain a unified front against Washington.

In a test of strength between Begin and Weizman in Herut, the latter would fare poorly because of his "dovish" stance. Although Weizman has wide backing for his stand in the Liberal Party, it is doubtful whether the Liberals are prepared to jeopardize their relationship with Herut. The hardline La'am component of the Likud looks to Dayan--not Weizman--for inspiration.

The behavior of the Labor Party in coming weeks will turn upon a combination of state and party interests. Labor would become receptive to calls for a "peace coalition" if a confrontation with the US seemed to be developing. On the other hand, few in Labor would want to share the blame for a deterioration in US-Israeli relations, especially because many Laborites believe that Begin's ideological rigidity is responsible.

Although Peres is widely suspected of harboring a longing for joining the coalition to satisfy his desire for ministerial status, the Labor Party would be pleased to stand aside and watch the Likud government destroy its

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~~TOP SECRET~~

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- 3 -

own prestige and credibility. In this context, Labor may see an opportunity for returning to power within the present Knesset if the Likud fragments and the DMC exits from the coalition.

In Lebanon, more UNIFIL troops arrived, but the flow remained very small. French troops in Beirut and Swedish on the Israel-Lebanese border as of late yesterday had not yet moved to the south. The ceasefire continued to hold with only minor violations. Early yesterday Katushya rockets fired from Tyre and Nabatiya landed in northern Israel.

The Israelis may be preparing to withdraw some forces from southern Lebanon as UN troops take up positions in the south and the prospects for renewed fighting decrease.

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